



<http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/>

Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club.

London :The Club,1893-

<http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/46639>

v.75 (1955): <http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/125673>

Page(s): Page 63, Page 64, Page 65, Page 66

Contributed by: Natural History Museum Library, London

Sponsored by: Natural History Museum Library, London

Generated 17 April 2015 6:48 AM

<http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/pdf4/038548600125673>

This page intentionally left blank.

problem in classification, but we believe our findings lend support to those who consider these two species may be a link between the *Charadriiformes* and the Bustards. In any case, Orders are artificial. The Bustards, *Otididae*, have been placed in the *Ralliformes*, but our preliminary findings in the *Rallidae* indicate at least a delayed pneumatisation.

In conclusion, we feel that it is open to criticism to use the *presence* of "windows" as arguments in classification problems. If they do prove to be flight adaptations, it must be that they originated at a later date than the bird in which they are found. In the case of the Courser and Stone Curlew, our arguments are based upon the *absence* of "windows". Classification is more likely to be served by studying the *method* of pneumatisation, of which little is known, but we are at present studying this aspect of the problem.

We are grateful to Dr. James M. Harrison who has given us his advice over this paper.

The South African Subspecies of the Yellow-fronted Canary *Serinus mozambicus* (Müller)

By MR. P. A. CLANCEY

Received 5th February, 1955.

The question of recognising other than the nominate race of the Yellow-fronted Canary *Serinus mozambicus* (Müller) from Africa south of the Zambesi River has resulted in much conflict of opinion, and the literature on the subject is now comparatively extensive. Sclater and Mackworth-Praed, in their revision of the races of this species, "Ibis", 1918, p. 465, and Sclater, "Systema Avium Aethiopicarum", part ii, 1930, p. 813, recognise only one race for the sub-continent, relegating to the synonymy of *S. m. mozambicus* (Müller), 1776: Mozambique, the putatively darker *S. m. icterus* (Vieillot), 1823: South Africa. Roberts, in a valuable note in the "Annals of the Transvaal Museum", vol. xvi, 1, 1935, p. 182, upholds the validity of the southern *S. m. icterus* and proposes the recognition of three races from South Africa, including his then recently described *S. m. vansoni* Roberts, 1932: Zweizwe Waterhole, northern Bechuanaland, and a similar view is expressed by the same author in his "Birds of South Africa", 1940, p. 366. More recently, Vincent, "Check List of the Birds of South Africa", 1952, p. 114, accords recognition to *S. m. mozambicus* and *S. m. vansoni*, rejecting *S. m. icterus* which is again placed in the synonymy of the nominotypical subspecies. Through the courteous co-operation of the Directors of the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, the Natal Museum, Pietermaritzburg, and the National Museum of Southern Rhodesia, Bulawayo, I have now been able to assemble and study a comprehensive material of 130 skins of the southern African populations of this common fringillid, and conclude that Roberts was perfectly justified in recommending the retention of a dark southern race, *S. m. icterus*, as distinct from *S. m. mozambicus*. The topotypical material of *S. m. vansoni* at present available in southern African collections is inadequate, but that which has been studied supports the view that the northern Bechuanaland populations are not subspecifically distinguishable from those of *S. m. mozambicus*.

Fringilla mozambica Müller, "Des Ritters C. von Linne. . . . Natur-systems Supplement", 1776, p. 163, was described from Mozambique, and of the topotypical populations I have examined a series of specimens from Boror in northern Portuguese East Africa and from several localities in the southern province of the territory. This topotypical material is matched perfectly by specimens from a wide range of localities in the eastern parts of the interior (Nyasa-land, Southern Rhodesia, northern Bechuanaland (Ngamiland), and the Transvaal). Material from northern Bechuanaland (topotypical of *S. m. vansoni*) is extremely limited in the research collections available to me, consisting only of a series of four, including the *Type* of *S. m. vansoni*. Roberts, "Annals of the Transvaal Museum", vol. xv, 1, 1932, p. 33, describes *S. m. vansoni* as "Differing from *S. m. mozambicus* (Müller) of Mozambique in its paler general colouration above and below. The yellow frontal band also constantly narrower and the tips of the tail feathers whiter", but not one of the characters enumerated actually serves to differentiate the proposed race. Of the inadequate paratypical series only the *Type* is now available in South Africa, and critical examination of it shows that it is in slightly worn plumage and that it is probably wrongly sexed. It is in no way paler than many specimens before me from localities within the range of *S. m. mozambicus* as defined by Roberts, *loc. cit.*, 1940, nor does it show less yellow on the forehead and more white in the tail than a great many examples of the nominate race. Similarly, the other three topotypical specimens of *S. m. vansoni* cannot be separated, and from the evidence now available it would appear that *S. m. vansoni* is not a valid race and must be sunk into the synonymy of *S. m. mozambicus*.

In the extreme south of the range of this species, in the eastern Cape Province and Natal, occur populations which differ significantly from those considered above. Viewed in series specimens of the southern populations, are markedly darker and greener above, less inclined to grey, and the sides of the breast and body and the flanks are darker, particularly in the female. There is also a tendency for the yellow surfaces in the southern birds to be more intensely coloured. This finding fits into the normal pattern of geographical variation to be expected in polytypic avian species with distributions ranging from the summer rainfall areas of the eastern Cape Province and Natal to the infinitely drier and less humid regions of the high interior and the eastern lowlands of Portuguese East Africa. The dark southern, peripheral populations clearly warrant recognition as a race, and for them the name *Fringilla ictera* Vieillot, "Tableau Encyclopédique et Méthodique . . . Ornithologie", vol. iii, 1823, p. 972: South Africa, is available, as already shown by Roberts and other workers. At the time Vieillot described his *F. ictera* only certain of the coastal districts of the eastern Cape Province and Natal of this favourite cagebird's South African range were readily accessible to European travellers and navigators. In order to stabilize the position of *S. m. icterus* in modern systematics it would seem desirable to define a more precise type-locality than simply "South Africa", and on historical grounds I here propose to restrict the type-locality of *S. m. icterus* to the EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE, South Africa.

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that two reasonably well-marked races of *S. mozambicus* are maintainable within the confines

of the South African sub-continent, and the nomenclature, characters and ranges of the races concerned can be defined as follows:

1. *Serinus mozambicus mozambicus* (Müller).

Fringilla mozambica P.L.S. Müller, "Des Ritters C. von Linne. . . . Natursystems Supplement", 1776, p. 163: Mozambique.

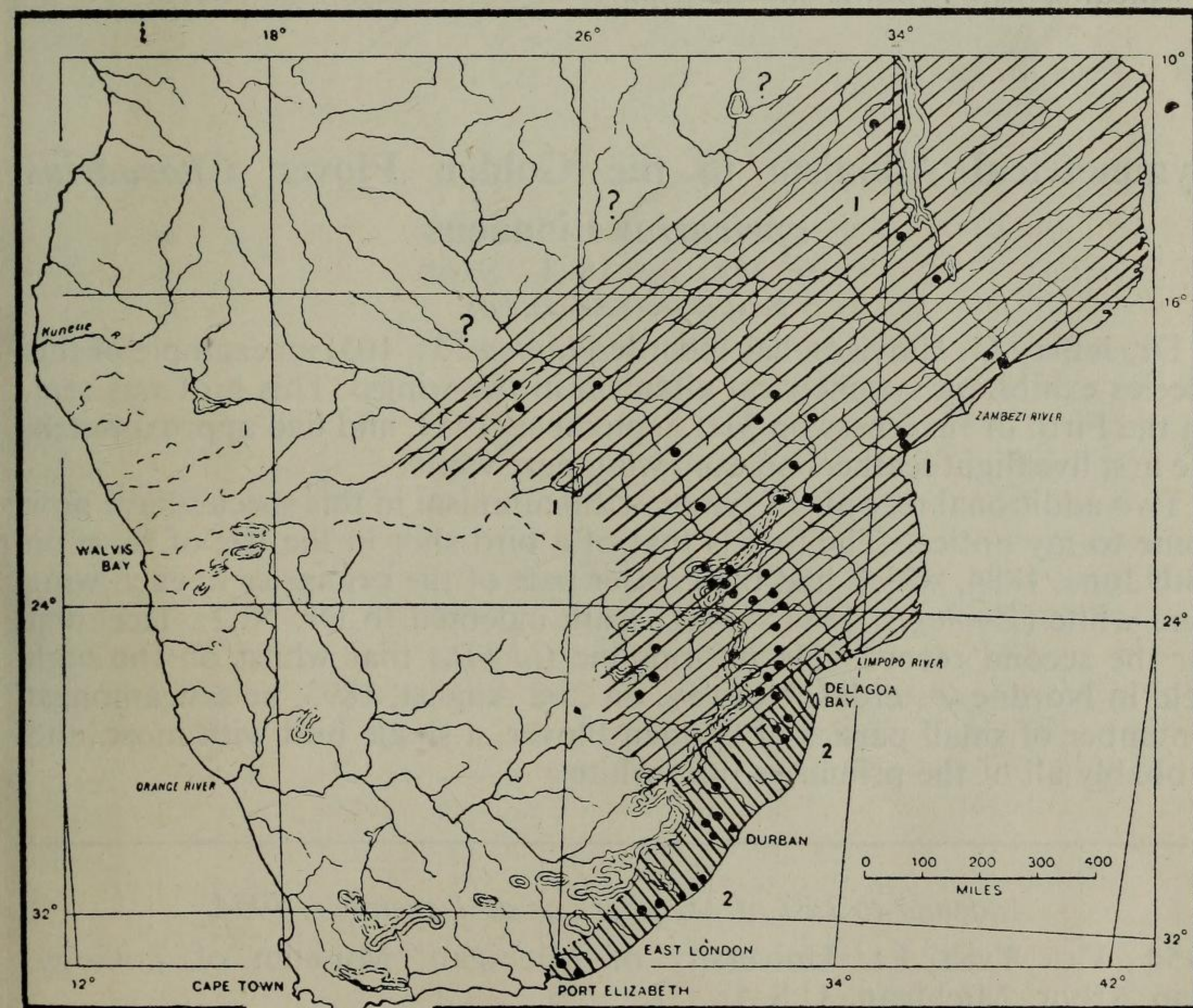
Synonym: *Serinus mozambicus vansoni* Roberts, "Annals of the Transvaal Museum", vol. xv, 1, 1932, p. 33: Zweizwe Waterhole, between Mababe Flats and the Chobe River, northern Bechuanaland.

Upper parts pale greyish olive-green, feathers with darker centres. On ventral surfaces, sides of the breast and body and the flanks washed greyish olivaceous. Wings (flattened), 64–73.5 mm.

(Seventy-five specimens examined).

Range: Within the South African sub-continent ranges from the northern parts of Bechuanaland (Ngamiland), the Transvaal, parts of the Orange Free State, and Southern Rhodesia eastward to Swaziland and the lowlands of southern Portuguese East Africa. Extra-limittally throughout the eastern half of Northern Rhodesia, Nyasaland, northern Portuguese East Africa, and presumably to southern Tanganyika Territory, but

Map showing the approximate ranges of the two recognisable South African races of *Serinus mozambicus* (Müller). Black dots indicate localities from which material has been critically examined. 1. *S.m.mozambicus*. 2. *S.m.icterus*.



northernmost limits both in the west and east still by no means clear. White and Winterbottom, "Check List of the Birds of Northern Rhodesia", 1949, p. 133, keep separate from the more widely distributed *S. m. mozambicus* the populations resident in Barotseland, using the name *S. m. vansoni* for the purpose. Material from Barotseland and adjacent areas to the westward should be re-examined in the light of what is here recorded.

Note: The species is recorded by Andersson "Notes on the Birds of Damaraland, etc.", 1872, p. 183, from Damaraland, South West Africa, but Herr W. Hoesch (*in litt.* January, 1955), states "We have never seen it in South West Africa in all the years". It is doubtful if this canary does in fact occur within the political boundaries of South West Africa.

2. *Serinus mozambicus icterus* (Vieillot).

Fringilla ictera Vieillot, "Tableau Encyclopédique et Méthodique . . . Ornithologie", vol. iii, 1823, p. 972: South Africa. Restricted type-locality: eastern Cape Province, South Africa, *vide supra*.

Darker and greener dorsally than *S. m. mozambicus*, with the sides of the breast and body and the flanks darker, particularly in the female. Yellow surfaces richer coloured. Wings (flattened) 66–74 mm. (Fifty-five specimens examined).

Range: The southern parts of the eastern Cape Province eastward through Pondoland, East Griqualand and Natal to Zululand and the littoral of the extreme southern parts of Portuguese East Africa.

Symmetrical Albinism in the Golden Plover *Charadrius*

apricarius Linnaeus

by MR. BRYAN L. SAGE

Received 15th February, 1955

Dr. Jeffery G. Harrison has recorded (*antea* 73: 105) an example of this species exhibiting symmetrical albinism in the wings. This bird was seen on the Firth of Inverness on 31st September, 1953, and had approximately the first five flight feathers on each wing pure white.

Two additional records of symmetrical albinism in this species have now come to my notice. The first is that of a bird shot in the Isle of Skye on 28th June, 1884, which had the greater part of the primaries in each wing pure white (*Zoologist* 1884: 346). I am indebted to Dr. N. F. Ticehurst for the second record. He informs me (*in litt.*) that whilst on the high fjeld in Nordne Østerdal, Norway, on 21st August, 1893, he saw amongst a number of small parties of Golden Plover, a single bird with most, and probably all of the primaries pure white.

Addenda to List of Members as at December, 1954

1954 VAN TYNE, J.; University of Michigan, Museum of Zoology, Ann Arbor, Michigan, U.S.A.

